

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0203

INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

USUN NEW YORK 1855

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMCONSUL LAHORE

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 10054

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, IN

SUBJ: ARRESTS SINCE INDIA'S EMERGENCY

REF: NEW DELHI 9392

SUMMARY: IT IS ESTIMATED THAT ALMOST 19,000 PERSONS ARE PRESENTLY UNDER ARREST IN INDIA. OVER 6000 REPORTEDLY ARE BEING HELD FOR POLITICAL REASONS. WE ACCORDINGLY BELIEVE MRS GANDHI WAS ROUNDING OFF" QUITE A BIT WHEN SHE INDICATED TO SEVERAL JOURNALISTS JULY 23 THAT ONLY "A FEW THOUSAND" PERSONS HAD BEEN ARRESTED. END SUMMARY.

1. ACCORDING TO OUR ESTIMATES ALMOST 19,000 PERSONS ARE CURRENTLY BEING HELD UNDER DETENTION IN INDIA
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FOR REASONS RELATED TO THE DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY.

OUR PRECISE ESTIMATE, BASED IN PART ON PRESS REPORTS COLLECTED AND TRANSMITTED TO US BY THE THREE CONSULATES, IS 18,783 PERSONS. OF THIS SUM, WE CALCULATE 12,684 PERSONS ARE BEING HELD FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC REASONS AND 6099 PERSONS FOR POLITICAL REASONS. THE LATTER FIGURE BREAKS DOWN INTO THOSE ARRESTS PUBLICLY DESCRIBED AS "POLITICAL," OR 2394 PERSONS, AND THOSE ARRESTS

RESULTING FROM THE PROSCRIPTION OF EXTREMIST COMMUNAL ORGANIZATIONS, OR 3705 PERSONS.

2. AS WE CAUTIONED IN REFTEL, IF WE HAVE ERRED WE HAVE DONE SO ON THE CONSERVATIVE SIDE. THUS, ALTHOUGH OUR CONSULATE IN CALCUTTA BELIEVES THAT THE ARREST FIGURE PUBLICLY REPORTED FOR WEST BENGAL OF QUOTE OVER A THOUSAND UNQUOTE IS CONSERVATIVE, WE HAVE NONETHELESS USED THE FIGURE ONE THOUSAND IN OUR CALCULATIONS IN THE ABSENCE OF A MORE DEFINITIVE FIGURE. FURTHERMORE, WE CONTINUE TO DRAW MOST FIGURES FROM NEWSPAPERS WHICH IN TURN RELY ON SPORADIC BRIEFINGS PROVIDED BY STATE OR DISTRICT INFORMATION OFFICERS. THE BRIEFERS THEMSELVES ARE OFTEN DRAWING ON DATED FIGURES, AND THE BRIEFINGS ARE MOUNTED IF AT ALL TO DISPEL THE MANY RUMORS OF EVEN MORE MASSIVE ARRESTS. THE RESIDENT COMMISSIONER OF BIHAR IN DELHI TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER SEVERAL DAYS AGO THAT BIHAR HAS DECIDED TO RELEASE ITS FIGURES, UNLIKE SOME OTHER STATES, ONLY BECAUSE OF THE POPULAR IMPRESSION THAT MANY MORE HAD BEEN ARRESTED THAN IN FACT HAD BEEN.

3. WE BELIEVE THE FIGURES ABOVE TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE SMALL NUMBER OF ARRESTEES WHO HAVE BEEN RELEASED. EACH STATE MAY HAVE ITS OWN POLICY ON RELEASING PRISONERS. THE PRESS REPORTS JULY 25 THAT EDITOR BABURAO PATEL OF THE JAN SANGH DAILY "MOTHERLAND" HAS JUST BEEN RELEASED BY THE MAHARASHTRA AUTHORITIES AFTER EXPRESSING REGRET FOR HIS WRITINGS. THE MAHARASHTRA CHIEF MINISTER SUBSEQUENTLY EXPLAINED THAT SIMILAR EXPRESSIONS OF REGRET HAD BEEN RECEIVED FROM

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OTHER DETAINEES BUT RELEASE ORDERS WOULD BE ISSUED ONLY IF THE GOVERNMENT WERE SATISFIED AS TO THE BONA FIDE INTENTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL DETAINEE.

4. DETAINED MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT NOW NUMBER TWENTY-SEVEN ACCORDING TO OUR CALCULATIONS. TWO NAMES ON OUR INITIAL LIST (REFTEL, PARA 4) SHOULD BE DELETED: CPM MEMBER A.K. GOPALAN AND BLD MEMBER H.. PATEL, BOTH

OF WHOM REPORTEDLY MADE APPEARANCES IN THE LOWER HOUSE BEFORE THE GENERAL OPPOSITION WALK-OUT JULY 23. APART FROM THESE DELETIONS THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD ADD TO THE LIST OF JAN SANGH DETAINEES THE NAME B.S. SHEKHAWAT, A RAJYA SABHA MEMBER INADVERTENTLY OMITTED FROM OUR INITIAL REPORT. JYOTIRMOY BOSU IS NOW BELIEVED TO BE DETAINED.

5. THE PRIME MINISTER TOLD MEXICAN JOURNALISTS WHO INTERVIEWED HER IN DELHI JULY 23 THAT "A FEW THOUSAND PEOPLE HAVE BEEN ARRESTED" SINCE THE DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY. SHE SAID THAT "ABOUT ONE-FOURTH OF THEM ARE POLITICAL PEOPLE" AND SHE DESCRIBED THE BALANCE AS "WHAT WE CALL ANTI-SOCIAL ELEMENTS, THAT IS, PEOPLE WHO USUALLY INDULGE IN CRIMES AND WHOSE NAMES ARE IN ALL THE POLICE STATIONS."

6. A FORMER PRINCELY RULER FROM MADHYA PRADESH TOLD AN EMBOFF JULY 24 THAT THE GOVT IS CONSTRUCTING "DETENTION CAMPS" IN HIS STATE TO HOLD THE OVERFLOW OF ARRESTEES.
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